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# Getting the Message: Opinion Polarization over Election Law

M. V. Hood III and Seth C. McKee

## ABSTRACT

This article demonstrates with survey data a pronounced shift in opinion movement on a restrictive voting provision: requiring a driver's license number to vote absentee by mail as per Georgia Republican legislators' passage of Senate Bill (SB) 202 in March 2021. The dynamic we uncover is asymmetric, with no significant movement in the opinions of Republican voters. The substantial shift in views is confined to Democratic and Independent voters, who strongly turned against this restrictive requirement in the second survey conducted after enactment of SB 202. The rapid and pronounced movement of certain opinions on a restrictive voting measure shows how easily the mass electorate can alter their views to reflect polarization in a policy domain during a time of historic partisan divisions.

**Keywords:** Georgia, election law, polarization, public opinion

## INTRODUCTION

IN THIS ARTICLE we analyze Georgia voters' opinion movement over an election law provision. The newly minted battleground state of Georgia quickly became the locus of President Trump's promotion of falsehoods regarding the outcome of the 2020 election. For the first time since Bill Clinton's 1992 victory, a Democratic presidential nominee was victorious and given the unique circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, like numerous other states, Georgia saw a surge in voting absentee by mail.

Also, like other states, Georgia absentee ballots were disproportionately cast by voters preferring Democratic candidates.<sup>1</sup> The fallout from Democratic victories for president in 2020 and two U.S.

Senate runoffs in early January 2021 was severe among Georgia's stunned ruling Republican Party. In the wake of the U.S. Capitol riot led by a group of Trump supporters one day after the Senate runoff elections, the Georgia Grand Old Party (GOP) saw election reform as a means to not just mollify but also boost the confidence of disgruntled and disbelieving Republican voters (Wickerstaff 2021).

Since the controversial outcome of the 2000 presidential election, Democrats and Republicans persist in fighting pitched battles over election administration and voting reforms (Hasen 2012; Keyssar 2009). The GOP prefers more restrictive voting laws for ensuring ballot security (von Spakovsky 2012), whereas Democrats advocate greater ballot access on the premise that voter fraud is exceedingly rare (Levitt 2012). This partisan split has been embraced by rank-and-file

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M. V. Hood III is a Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia, USA. Seth C. McKee is a Professor in the Department of Political Science at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma, USA.

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<sup>1</sup>In terms of the total (two-party) absentee votes cast for president in Georgia, 65% went to the Democrat Joe Biden, whereas he won the state by a two-party margin of 11,779 votes (50.1%).

Democrats and Republicans (Gronke et al. 2019), but what is the dynamic in opinion on a specific election law provision?

On March 25, 2021, Georgia Republicans passed Senate Bill (SB) 202, an extensive voting reform law.<sup>2</sup> Among its numerous provisions was a hotly contested requirement for voters to provide a valid driver's license number to cast an absentee ballot by mail.<sup>3</sup>

With survey data on 2020 Georgia voters before (pre-enactment) and after (post-enactment) passage of SB 202, we find an interesting and pronounced opinion dynamic: Republicans exhibit no significant change in their views toward this requirement for absentee voting, while Democrats and Independents show substantial movement in opposition to the law. This asymmetric opinion pattern speaks to how certain voters shift against a specific voting provision when they receive the message that a party's actions undermine their interests (Levendusky 2010).

## DATA

Our data are from two live-interviewer telephone surveys of Georgia voters conducted by the School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA) Survey Research Center at the University of Georgia. The first survey was conducted January 17–28, 2021 (during the legislative session), with the second survey conducted March 31–April 19, 2021 (after SB 202 was signed into law). The first sample included 831 Georgia registrants who reported voting in the 2020 general election, with the second survey comprising 887 voters.

In addition to gauging voter opinions concerning election reform in Georgia, information on partisanship, ideology, age, gender, race, education, and income were also recorded. Post-stratification weighting was applied to ensure respondents were representative of the 2020 Georgia electorate in terms of education, race, gender, and age.

While we do not have panel data, we do have two representative samples of Georgia voters to compare over time (before and following enactment of SB 202) while controlling for other political and demographic factors. We use these data for tabular comparisons as well as a multivariate model. For the model results presented in Figure 2, we analyze the two samples together using a dummy variable to denote time: pre- versus post-

enactment of SB 202. We separate opinions on the voter identification requirement for casting absentee ballots by party over time, by including interaction effects between party affiliation and time period (see the Appendix for model results, variable coding, and other technical notes).

## RELATED STUDIES AND EXPECTATIONS

For years now, partisans in the electorate have received the message regarding the broader frame of ballot access versus ballot security. In short, Democrats want to make the act of voting easier, while Republicans advocate for additional safeguards, arguably under the guise of preventing fraud.<sup>4</sup> The actual political and policy manifestation of this disagreement has taken the form of remarkably polarized partisan votes cast in state legislatures with respect to whether election laws should be altered to make voting more restrictive or more convenient.

Most of the literature examining state legislator voting behavior on election reform has keyed in on voter identification (ID) provisions (e.g., Biggers and Hanmer 2017; Hicks et al. 2015) due to the pervasiveness of this issue, raised and advanced by Republican lawmakers throughout the United States, starting in the mid-2000s (Hicks, McKee, and Smith 2016; Keyssar 2009).

The studies on voter ID laws inform our work. If we move from the general frame of ballot access versus ballot security to a more specific election provision, then it is expected that the mass public will not exhibit nearly as much polarization. For

<sup>2</sup>Only Republicans voted yes on SB 202, all Democrats voted no on the legislation.

<sup>3</sup>Prior to SB 202 Georgia used signature verification to validate absentee by mail ballots. With SB 202, absentee voters are required to provide their driver's license or state identification (ID) number for verification. In lieu of a state ID number, absentee voters can also provide the last four digits of their Social Security number or photocopy another form of photo or non-photo identification (e.g., a passport or utility bill). Voters lacking a driver's license also qualify to receive a free photo ID for voting purposes available through county registrar's offices. Since 2007, Georgia has required in-person voters (early or election-day) to provide requisite government-issued photo identification to cast a regular ballot.

<sup>4</sup>We would agree with Levitt (2012) that the scholarly consensus concerning voter fraud (of just about any form) in the American context is that it is exceedingly rare. Nevertheless, the focus of this article centers not on the actual occurrence of fraud but on voter perceptions of fraud.

instance, despite years of partisan wrangling over strict photo ID laws in most state legislatures, it remains true that the vast majority of Americans, regardless of party affiliation, support requiring ID to vote at the polls (Gronke et al. 2019; Kane and Wilson 2021).

Like Kane and Wilson (2021), we agree that the high level of support for voter ID is because most Americans have not given much serious thought to the issue.<sup>5</sup> Comporting with a long line of research on the behavior of the American voter (Campbell et al. 1960; Converse 1964; Downs 1957; Kinder and Kalmoe 2017; Popkin 1991), lacking an incentive to reflect on the details of a certain legal provision, it is no wonder that compared to elected officeholders, the mass public exhibits notably less partisan polarization over voter ID.

Georgia, however, is a compelling case for altering opinions on detailed election law provisions because it was a crucible for partisan battles over the outcome of the 2020 presidential election and the subsequent 2021 senatorial runoffs. The surprise defeats Republicans endured in these pivotal contests spurred Georgia's GOP lawmakers to quickly respond to an angry and disillusioned Republican electorate (Wickerstaff 2021). Like Republican-controlled states acting before (e.g., Iowa) and after Georgia (e.g., Florida and Texas), election reform has clearly become a chosen course and means for reassuring the GOP base that going forward there should be fewer reasons to question the vote count (Riccardi and Biesecker 2021).

Even at the time of this writing former President Trump has continued to falsely claim the 2020 election was stolen from him and that stricter voting laws need to be passed to ensure ballot security. Specifically, Trump's public feud with Republican Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger made national news because Raffensperger secretly recorded the president pleading for him to come up with one more vote than Biden's Georgia margin (Gardner 2021).

It is likely that Trump's relentless attack on Georgia's election administration in 2020, and his leading the charge for election reforms, contributed to Democrats and Independents turning against restrictive voting measures contained in Senate Bill 202. What is certain is that in this contentious setting, Georgia Democrats raised an uproar over the imminent passage of SB 202, which contained numerous

provisions altering extant Georgia election law (Niesse 2021).

The dynamics prevailing in Georgia at the time of the first and second surveys yield several expectations. First, because partisans understand the broad frame of ballot access versus ballot security, there should be negligible opinion movement among Democrats and Republicans on this type of question from the first to second survey.

In contrast, because Georgia Independents flipped in favor of the Democratic Party in the 2020 presidential election, we anticipate that these voters will show significant opinion movement in favor of ballot access over ballot protection as registered in the second survey.<sup>6</sup> In other words, Independents, in their short-term shift to the Democratic Party, likely also moved their opinions on election law in

<sup>5</sup>Kane and Wilson (2021) employ an experimental survey design that shows when respondents are confronted with evidence of political controversy over voter ID laws, Democrats move strongly against them (see also Kane 2017, who finds strong Democratic opposition to voter ID if the requirement is framed as electorally detrimental). Additionally, given a framing around costs associated with acquiring valid ID, partisans of both major parties reduce support for voter ID laws. In our study, we assess possible opinion movement over an election provision before and after its enactment. We do this because the furor over this election law provision materializes after the first survey concluded. Hence, similar to Kane and Wilson (2021), we have an intervening factor (the mobilization of vociferous opposition to SB 202) that likely altered opinions toward this specific election law provision. In a media environment devoting substantial coverage to the partisan battle over election law in Georgia, it is likely that partisans easily grasp the narrative that Senate Bill 202 is intended to benefit Republicans more than Democrats if for the obvious cue that only Republican lawmakers voted in favor of the law (see Biggers 2019; Levendusky 2009, 2010). We of course do not expect that voters were aware that only Republicans voted for SB 202, but we actually asked respondents to provide us a range (in percentage terms) in which Democratic and Republican lawmakers voted yes on SB 202, and the vast majority of respondents recognized that Republican legislators favored the legislation while Democratic legislators opposed it. Exact results are available upon request. As for a more obvious partisan signal, we are not aware of a single Democratic elite in Georgia or elsewhere at the time of our study who sided with Republicans in pushing for election reform of the kind embodied in SB 202.

<sup>6</sup>Including third-party voting, in the 2016 exit poll of Georgia voters, 52% of Independents (30% of all Georgia voters) supported Trump versus 41% who backed Clinton (CNN 2016). In the 2020 exit poll of Georgia voters, 53% of Independents (28% of all Georgia voters) went for Biden versus 44% for Trump (CNN 2020). Likewise, the exit polls have Georgia Independent voters favoring the Democratic candidates in the two 2021 Senate runoffs by 52% to 48%.

the same direction (Key 1966), that is, in opposition to salient Republican-passed legislation the Georgia GOP promoted as a way to safeguard against ballot fraud.

Importantly, as we show in the next section, the hue and cry against implementation of election reforms did not reach a fever pitch until after our first survey was completed. Hence, the changed communication milieu at the time of the second survey should reveal the greatest effect on Independents who otherwise were not attuned to the ongoing partisan feud over ballot access versus ballot security.

In addition to querying registered Georgia voters' opinions on the broad frame of making voting easier versus adopting additional safeguards to protect against fraud, we also gauge opinions toward a more specific provision included in SB 202. However, at the time of the first survey, we could not know the exact details of how SB 202 would alter absentee voting by mail. We did expect that some additional verification requirement would be necessary to cast an absentee ballot, and the survey language reflected this (the exact question is presented in the next section). Because the second survey was administered after passage of SB 202, we tailored the question to speak to the enacted requirement that a voter record their driver's license number to vote absentee by mail.

Just as Republicans have exhibited overwhelming support for strict photo ID (Gronke et al. 2019; Kane and Wilson 2021), we expect they will demonstrate the same high level of support for including a driver's license number to vote absentee by mail.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast, because of extensive national, state, and local media coverage of (Georgia) Democrats' vocal opposition to SB 202, especially by the time we conducted the second survey (after the law passed with only Republicans' votes), we should find considerable opinion movement among Democrats and Independents. That is, in the second survey Democrats and Independents should exhibit a notable shift against the driver's license number requirement for casting an absentee ballot by mail. What we are not certain of is whether this expected opinion movement against requiring a driver's license number is more pronounced among Independents or Democrats.

## RESULTS

Before presenting the results of our multivariate analysis, we need evidence to show that reporting

and interest in questions about voting and election laws ratcheted up in the time after the first survey.

Figures 1a and 1b indicate heightened interest in questions surrounding voting and election laws since the first survey was administered. Both figures present data recorded on a daily basis, starting on December 13, 2020, and concluding April 19, 2021 (the final day of the second survey). Figure 1a is a count of *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (AJC) articles (in print and/or electronic form) whose content included language about "voter suppression" or the "Georgia voting law." Two patterns are obvious: (1) reporting on "voter suppression" dominates AJC coverage until late March when stories about the "Georgia voting law" show up, and (2) there are many more AJC articles on both topics after the first survey concluded.

Figure 1b shows the rate of Google searches in Georgia for the keywords "voter suppression" and "Georgia voting law." These data are indexed so that "100 is the maximum search interest for the time and location selected" (Rogers 2016). As shown in Figure 1b, the rate of Google searches in Georgia based on the term "voter suppression" spikes (62 on the 100 scale) a day after SB 202 was signed into law (on March 26, 2021). And a little over a week after passage of SB 202, Google searches based on the term "Georgia voting law" peak at 100 on April 3, 2021, which is during the administration of the second survey.

Though admittedly imperfect proxies of political communication, the data presented in Figures 1a and 1b suggest that Georgia voters are receiving and seeking information about the impending and eventual enactment of an election law containing several restrictive voting provisions.

Table 1 provides descriptive data highlighting Georgia voters' views on election law and the pronounced asymmetric shift in opinions on the more specific question of a restrictive measure for casting

<sup>7</sup>As Gronke et al. (2019) contend, rank-and-file Republicans' support of restrictive voting measures, in their case, specifically strict photo ID, has become established party orthodoxy. Similarly, there is every reason to believe that Republican Georgia voters likewise overwhelmingly support an ID requirement for casting an absentee ballot by mail. Below, we show that over 90% of Republican Georgia voters backed this election law provision contained in SB 202.

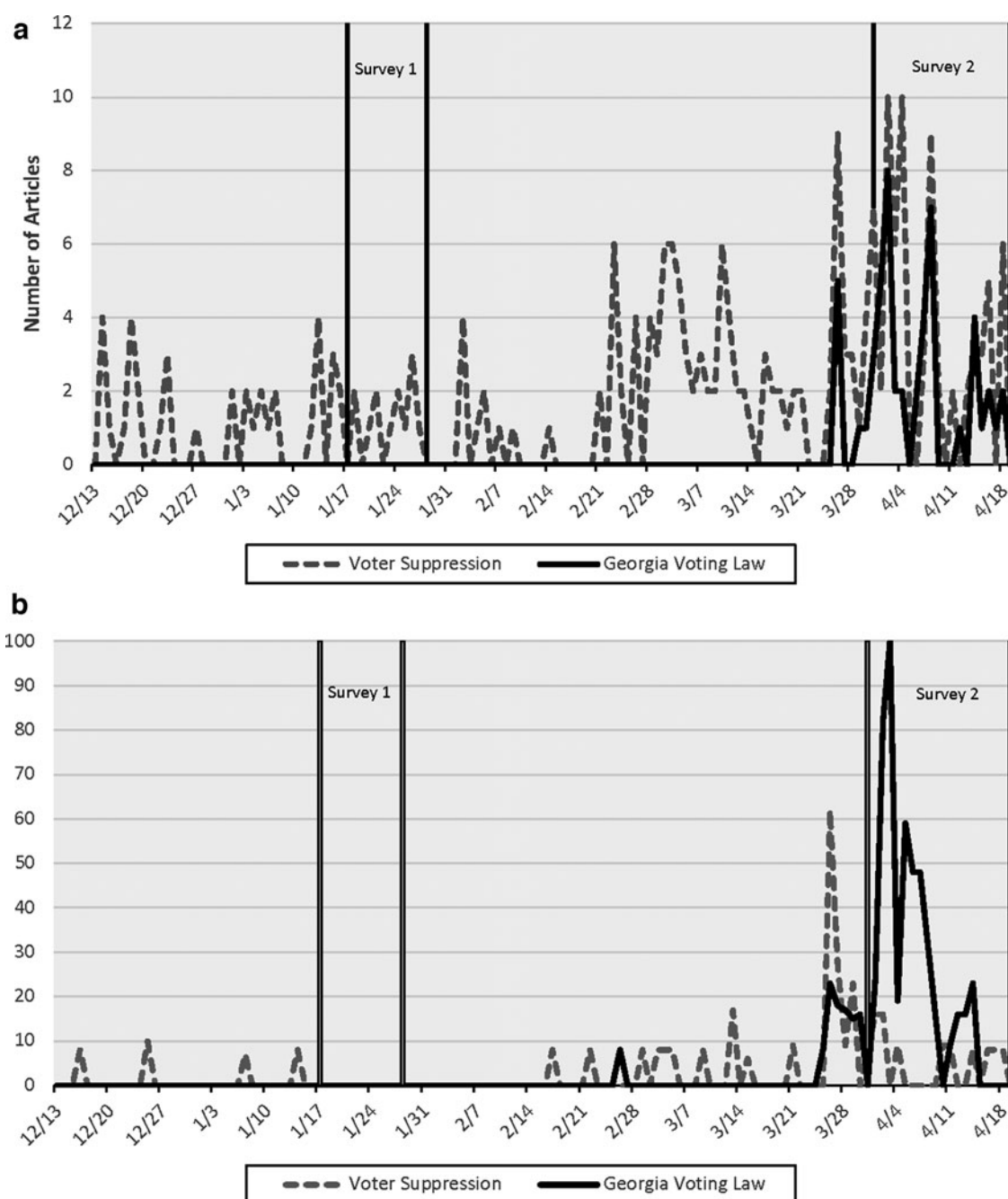


FIG. 1. (a) *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* article mentions. (b) Google searches within Georgia.

an absentee ballot. In the first and second surveys, Georgia voters were asked the following question: “Do you think it is more important to make voting easy for eligible voters or to have additional safeguards against potential voting fraud?” As expected, because Democratic and Republican voters are well versed in their party’s positioning on the question of access versus security (Gronke et al.

2019), there is no significant change in their respective opinions on this question before and after enactment of SB 202.

In other words, mass partisan polarization on this overarching question framing the “voting wars” (Hasen 2012) is not new. As anticipated, the movement on this question is confined to Independents, who exhibit a marked and significant shift in favor

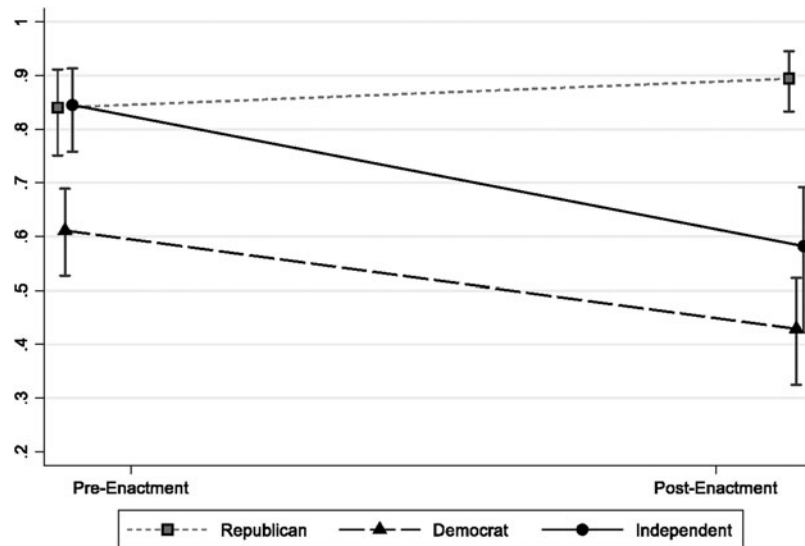


FIG. 2. Absentee ballot ID opinion change by party.

of accessibility and hence against additional voting safeguards.<sup>8</sup> We liken this dynamic to other studies that find the greatest opinion shift being generated by Independents (see Hayes and Guardino 2011; Mason, Wronski, and Kane 2021) as opposed to partisans, with the critical assumption that these normally less politically engaged voters (Campbell et al. 1960) are receiving and responding to political communication that subsequently shapes their opinions (Zaller 1992).

The bottom half of Table 1 presents two very similar and more specific questions regarding additional documentation for casting an absentee ballot. Before enactment of SB 202 (in response to legislative proposals at that time), Georgia voters in the first survey were asked: “Do you support or oppose requiring voters to include a copy of their photo ID or other documentation in order to cast an absentee ballot by mail?”

After enactment of SB 202, this question was modified to conform to the law as passed: “Do you support or oppose requiring voters include their Driver’s license number for verification in order to cast an absentee ballot by mail?” Though obviously not verbatim questions, they are similar enough to assess possible changes in voter opinions before and after passage of SB 202.<sup>9</sup>

Reflecting the messaging of President Trump, his allies, and the GOP long before passage of SB 202, Republican Georgia voters are locked into the position of supporting an additional step for casting an absentee ballot by mail (92% before and 93% after passage of SB 202). By comparison, most

Democrats (55.2%) in the first survey also favor requiring ID for casting an absentee ballot. But in the second survey, 60.7% of Democrats now oppose SB 202’s requiring a driver’s license number to vote absentee by mail.

Equally noteworthy is the massive shift in Independents’ opinions. Over 85% of Independents

<sup>8</sup>The total sample response distribution (with the inclusion of those who chose the “Don’t know” option) for the first question referenced in the text and shown in Table 1, is as follows:

	Pre	Post
Accessible	39.5%	41.1%
Safeguards	56.5%	52.1%
Don’t know	4.0%	6.8%

<sup>9</sup>It is possible that some of the noted opinion shift we observe may be due to the fact that the wording on these two questions is not exactly the same. However, it is unlikely to be the case that this artifact is accounting for the lion’s share of the large opinion shift observed. The exact mechanism aside, voters in Georgia should be able to discern from either question that there is a new requirement (proposed or passed) to provide ID when voting absentee by mail. The total sample response distribution (with the inclusion of those who chose the “Don’t know” option) for the second question (as posed to registered Georgia voters in its pre- and post-enactment form) referenced in the text and shown in Table 1, is as follows:

	Pre	Post
Support	75.4%	64.6%
Oppose	21.5%	32.2%
Don’t know	3.1%	3.2%

TABLE 1. THE BROAD FRAME AND THE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ON A RESTRICTIVE VOTING MEASURE

*Do you think it is more important to make voting easy for eligible voters or to have additional safeguards against potential voting fraud?*

Party Affiliation	Pre-Enactment	Post-Enactment	Difference	Pre-Enactment	Post-Enactment	Difference
	Accessible			Safeguards		
Democrat	75.6	79.3	+3.7	21.8	12.5	-9.3
Independent	30.9	54.7	+23.8*	60.6	34.1	-26.5*
Republican	6.9	5.3	-1.6	88.8	91.0	+2.2

**Pre-enactment:** *The Georgia Legislature is considering changing the ways Georgians may vote. Do you support or oppose requiring voters to include a copy of their photo ID or other documentation in order to cast an absentee ballot by mail?*

**Post-enactment:** *The Georgia Legislature has recently passed legislation changing the state's election system. Do you support or oppose requiring voters include their Driver's license number for verification in order to cast an absentee ballot by mail?*

	<i>Pre-Enactment</i>	<i>Post-Enactment</i>	<i>Difference</i>	<i>Pre-Enactment</i>	<i>Post-Enactment</i>	<i>Difference</i>
	<i>Oppose</i>			<i>Support</i>		
Democrat	39.9	60.7	+20.8**	55.2	35.3	-19.9**
Independent	12.6	39.5	+26.9	85.3	53.9	-31.4**
Republican	6.6	5.5	-1.1	92.0	93.4	+1.4

Notes: In the top half of the table the same exact question was posed to Georgia voters before (pre-enactment) and after (post-enactment) passage of SB 202.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .001$ .

support additional documentation to vote absentee by mail in the first survey. In the second survey, though still a majority, now only 54% of Independents support requiring a driver's license number to cast an absentee ballot by mail.

We contend that these dynamics reflect Democratic elites (and their allies) successfully delivering a message to voters in opposition to the Republican-passed SB 202. We doubt there is necessarily something specific about this provision that polarized Democrats and shifted Independents. More likely, it is the negative reference group cue (Lupia 1994; Popkin 1991) that Georgia Republicans championed this legislation and hence it must be designed to make voting harder (Kane and Wilson 2021).<sup>10</sup>

Figure 2 shows predicted probabilities according to party (Democrat, Independent, and Republican) from the probit model displayed in Table A1 of the Appendix. The summary statistics in the bottom half of Table 1 hold up robustly, after controlling for Georgia voters' race, ideology, age, gender, education, and income. The dependent variable equals 1 for those who support requiring identification for casting an absentee ballot by mail and 0 for those who oppose this stipulation (as per the questions displayed in Table 1). The key variables are the interactions between party and time (pre- and post-enactment of SB 202).

Republican opinion on SB 202's absentee ballot provision, although not statistically significant, moves even more in favor of requiring identification for absentee voting by mail: going from 0.84 to 0.89. Given the extant polarization of GOP voters in favor of restrictive election reforms (their baseline position if you will), there is essentially a ceiling effect because there is little remaining room for this group to further shift their overwhelming support of this provision following enactment of SB 202.

By comparison, controlling for other factors, at the time of the first survey, Independents are most supportive of placing restrictions on casting an absentee ballot by mail (0.85), but they also move the most against such a measure in the second survey, dropping to a 0.58 probability in favor of this new provision in SB 202 (the .27 probability difference is statistically significant).

<sup>10</sup>One estimate placed the percentage of registrants without a driver's license or state ID number associated with their record in the voter registration database at 2% [154,411 registrants] (Niesse 2021). It is possible, as well, that some proportion of this 2% of registrants might also possess other forms of requisite photo identification such as a military ID, college ID, or passport.

Finally, in the case of Democratic voters, after enactment of SB 202, only a minority of Georgia Democrats favor proof of identification for voting absentee by mail. Specifically, Democrats' likelihood of support for this kind of restrictive measure in SB 202 drops a statistically significant 20 percentage points, from 0.61 to 0.41.<sup>11</sup>

## CONCLUSION

After the 2020 presidential contest and the two Senate runoffs in early January 2021, Georgia Republicans felt compelled to act upon a disappointing election cycle. Senate Bill 202 became the GOP's vehicle for tamping down Republican voters' unrest and disillusionment with the election results, particularly in the case of fervent Trump supporters. President Trump repeatedly fanned the flames of doubt in advance of the 2020 outcome, contributing to Republicans' subsequent denial and loss of confidence in the vote count (Jacobson 2021). Specifically, President Trump cast doubt on the validity of absentee ballots, the lion's share of which went to his opponent Joe Biden.

Priming the illegitimacy of absentee voting likely accounts for why Georgia Republican voters' opinions on the specific restrictive voting provision we examine were dug in at the time of the first survey. In contrast, the second survey showed a pronounced shift in Democratic and Independent opinion against additional documentation to cast an absentee ballot by mail. We attribute this dynamic to a marked uptick in (negative) messaging about SB 202 since its passage in late March 2021.

Many years before the 2020 presidential election, Democrats and Republicans polarized over the broad issue of ballot access versus ballot security (Hasen 2012). But given more specific questions on a restrictive voting measure, opinion polarization needed activation (Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018), at least for some groups.

In the markedly more saturated partisan communication environment present at the time of our second survey, Democratic and Independent voters got the message that SB 202 and the particular provision we focus on was inimical to their interests. To be sure, most Independents still favored additional documentation for voting absentee by mail, but their opinion movement was greater than that

<sup>11</sup>The results of an unweighted model (in the Supplementary Appendix) are substantively similar to those reported for the weighted model in the Appendix. For the unweighted model (in the Supplementary Appendix) Republican support increases across the pre- and post-enactment time periods from 0.85 to 0.89; Democratic support slips from 0.57 to 0.43; and Independent support moves from 0.79 to 0.70. An anonymous reviewer questioned the plausibility of Independent movement being greater than that of Democrats, based on the estimates of the weighted probit model in the Appendix and the corresponding plotted results shown in Figure 2. The unweighted model discussed above shows greater opinion movement among Democrats, but we believe the weighted model is a more accurate depiction of Georgia voters' opinions because the sample is closely representative of the 2020 electorate. Additionally, given the saturated informational/media environment during Georgia Republicans' impending and eventually successful passage of SB 202, we do not find it to be peculiar/curious that Independent opinion exhibits greater movement than that registered by Democrats. Generally speaking, if Independents receive a political message (Zaller 1992) that should move them in their preferred/predisposed direction, then it is not surprising that their subsequent opinion movement is greater than that of partisans. Independents, by nature, are not as anchored to an existing political position, and therefore their opinion change is often more pronounced than that of partisans who typically hold firmer preexisting attitudes (Stimson 2004). For instance, in a forthcoming article in the *American Political Science Review*, Mason, Wronski, and Kane (2021)

found that panel respondents expressing animosity toward certain Democratically aligned groups (African Americans, Muslims, Hispanics, and gays and lesbians) in 2011 were in future surveys (conducted in 2016, 2017, and 2018) the most favorable toward President Trump. This relationship proved robust regardless of a respondent's party affiliation, and Independents registered the greatest movement in favor of President Trump (Figure 3 in Mason, Wronski, and Kane (2021)), which makes sense because Republicans and Democrats should exhibit less movement in favor or against the most visible partisan and political figure (the president of the United States) in an era characterized by hyper-partisan judgments/evaluations of American presidents (Jacobson 2021). We view the Georgia case in this study as one in which voters, regardless of party affiliation, are unquestionably receiving "clearer cues" (Levendusky 2010) because of a saturated media environment covering the pronounced elite partisan polarization over election law. Going back to Schattschneider (1960), who advises us to pay attention when a political fight breaks out because those involved on either side of the dispute/issue will send salient signals to those witnessing the skirmish, we have no doubt that Georgia's Independent voters were aware of the partisan battle over SB 202 and chose sides according to their short-term alignment with the Democratic Party. In a related paper (M. V. Hood III and Seth C. McKee, "Partisan Schism in America's Newest Swing State." Manuscript (2021)), among ten provisions in SB 202, we find Independents consistently aligned with Democrats, and both groups were significantly more opposed than Republicans were, to these ten alterations to Georgia's election law.



of Democrats, who are even more inclined to interpret Republican-led election reforms as detrimental to their welfare.

The rapid and substantial opinion movement we uncover is perhaps only possible in a political environment where the activation of partisan disagreement is so easily registered and acted upon. Indeed, this substantial opinion change typifies the historically high rate of emotionally and socially based partisan polarization found within the contemporary American electorate (Abramowitz 2018; Abramowitz and Webster 2016, 2018; Iyengar et al. 2019; Mason 2018).

## SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

### Supplementary Appendix

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Address correspondence to:

M. V. Hood III

Department of Political Science

School of Public and International Affairs

104 Baldwin Hall

The University of Georgia

Athens, GA 30602

USA

E-mail: th@uga.edu

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## Appendix

### ADDITIONAL SURVEY NOTES

For each survey, a dual-frame statewide random sample consisting of approximately 70% cell phone numbers and 30% landline numbers was obtained through L2. The sample was subset to include only registrants who had voted in the 2020 general as determined by official voting history records from the Georgia Secretary of State. Respondents were also asked if they had voted in the 2020

election, with those indicating they had not voted being screened out of the survey.

### VARIABLE CODING

#### Dependent variable

Support for Absentee ID Requirement = 1;  
Opposition = 0

(Appendix continues →)

*Independent variables*

*Black*: 1 = Black voter; 0 = All others

*Other Minority*: 1 = Other minority voter; 0 = All others

*Ideology*: 1 = Very liberal; 2 = Liberal; 3 = Slightly liberal; 4 = Moderate; 5 = Slightly conservative; 6 = Conservative; 7 = Very Conservative

*Age*: In years

*Female*: 1 = Male; 2 = Female

*Education*: 1 = High school or less; 2 = Some college/technical degree; 3 = College degree; 4 = Graduate degree

*Income*: 1 = \$25,000 or less; 2 = \$25,000–49,999; 3 = \$50,000–74,999; 4 = \$75,000–99,999; 5 = \$100,000–\$149,999; 6 = \$150,000 or greater

*Democrat*: 1 = Democratic identifier (including leaners); 0 = All others

*Independent*: 1 = Independents (no leaners); 0 = All others

*Post-enactment*: 1 = Post-enactment of SB 202 (second survey); 0 = Pre-enactment (first survey)

*Democrat x Post-enactment*: Democrat \* Post-enactment

*Independent x Post-enactment*: Independent \* Post-enactment

Predicted probabilities are generated using the observed values method, see: Hanmer and Kalkan (2013).

APPENDIX TABLE A1. PREDICTING SUPPORT FOR ABSENTEE BALLOT IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENT

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>
Black	-.0547 (.1589)
Other minority	-.1027 (.1642)
Ideology	.2151*** (.0472)
Age	-.0005 (.0004)
Female	.3047* (.1265)
Education	-.2112** (.0661)
Income	-.0319 (.0450)
Democrat	-.8228** (.2496)
Independent	.0209 (.2691)
Post-enactment	.2857 (.2085)
Democrat * Post-enactment	-.8158** (.2596)
Independent * Post-enactment	-1.2184*** (.3557)
Constant	.4778 (.4282)
<i>N</i>	1,358

*Notes*: Entries are probit coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses.

Dependent variable: Support for absentee ID requirement = 1; Opposition = 0.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .